1: Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
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Saramacca

good humor, and looked with disfavor on the friendly conversation between us. Her bad temper, we learned later, had earned for her the name of Mother Snake, given her by a witty town servant of a lumber factor. The idea of dressing our hair apparently appealed to the woman, however, for it would certainly only be a reckless white who would offer his hair for combing to a stranger, since with hair any number of supernatural things might be done. With the proper formula, a few hairs, and the required ingredients she might fashion an *opo*, let us say. Now an opo serves many purposes, but its essential quality is that it gives its owner power over the one whose essence is captured in the form of hair, or a scrap of garment, or finger nails, or whatever else had touched the person against whom one has designs. The power of the possessor of the opo is to dominate the will of the other, and its particular attribute might be to function in love, or in a court of justice, or in matters of getting employment, or of receiving gifts. But an opo would be the least dangerous consequence, for an opo is not to be conceived of as being in the category of bad magic. There is the danger of *wisi*—a word which has the double meaning of poison and black magic—and hair, or finger nails, or the menstrual cloth of a woman, or perspiration are the very best materials for working wisi.

And so the good woman, known when she was among us as Tita, and as Mother Snake otherwise, saw that we offered no cause for alarm and added her advice to Tenye's in pointing out powers which we might acquire and use to spectacular advantage in our white country.

"Yes, you must make pina bonsu," she said, adding her approval, "and then your husband will prefer you to his other wives. But if you want to keep him all to yourself, you must let us cut *kamemba*—cicatrized designs—on you. An ingi kodjo here on each cheek to begin with," turning to Tenye and smiling.

And so it was all planned. The Indian cudgel, a euphemism for the buttocks, and procreative symbols were to be

1:Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1994
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Chapter XIV

GRANMAN MOANA YANKUSO

I

114 WHATEVER the rôle of the great man in the life of a people, there are names whose very mention bring up almost full-bodied an epoch, a great dynamic sweep of human thought and activity, of achievement, and sometimes of disaster. Perhaps the great individual does not exist until the poetic vision of a people gives to the skeleton of a name the flesh of a godhead. From earliest times and from people of varying civilizations have come down tales of these godheads, created, let us say if we like, out of a psychic need in the life of human beings to exalt personality in order that, imaginatively at least, the chasm between desire and insufficiency might be spanned.

GA3 159 In the council house of Granman Yankuso, as we listened to his stories, these thoughts constantly recurred to us, and it is not strange, therefore, that now as we try to collect images and impressions of the man for an objective picture of him not only as a Bush Negro but as an individual, we think of him as typifying among the Negroes of the Saramacca today such a name and such a personality.

Already Moana Yankuso was something of a myth among the people of the coastal region and among his own people.

Men on the coast said, "Granman Yankuso is a silent [159] man. You will be with him for days, and he will never utter a word."

1: Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
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GRANMAN MOANA YANKUSO

"Granman Yankuso is the tallest man on the river, and the darkest," they said. "He speaks little. When he is angry, his growl strikes terror in all who hear him."

People said, "The Granman is a clever man. You can tell him about your work in the way you would speak to your own educated men, and he will understand you."

"They will take away everything you have up there on the river."

"They will never bring you to the Granman. He will see to it."

In the villages of the Saramacca country we heard again and again proverbs he had originated, which were quoted when men told of this almost mythical personality.

"The Granman says, 'No one must die, but the burial place cannot lie idle,' " Bayo once quoted him.

"What does it mean, Bayo?"

"It is deep, white man. The Granman is wise."

Kasanya once quoted another of the Granman's proverbs. "If the gods say take one step at a time, do not stand still, and take two steps the next time in anger."

On this river they told us that Granman Moana Yankuso knew all that went on. It was a kind of magic he had: whatever men did anywhere, he knew.

And they said, too, that men were afraid to cross him, not alone because of his rank, but because his spirits were strong.

2.

It is difficult to be objective about Moana Yankuso. In the terms his own people use, the explanation of his personality would be the explanation given of any other.

"He has strong gods."

If we urged them to explain what were the gods of a man they were praising, they would describe the Tiger spirit the man had, and what knowledge of healing and future events his Opete obia, his buzzard spirit, gave him, and how he had come by a special obia which had passed down to him from a famous magician of the earliest times.

1: Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
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willing to touch the phonograph, they never tired of hearing about its mechanism and how it was that a voice was recorded and instantly reproduced. But the mystery of the moment was this projector.

We had delayed showing these photographs as long as we could, for what leads we could get to African survivals, we sought, for many reasons, to get singly. Not the least of these reasons was that the Bush Negro, who knew the method of krutu, did not allow himself to be impulsive in new situations, especially if they involved strangers. If something unfamiliar was presented, he wanted time to think and to krutu about it with others of his kind. Memories of the early experiences of their people seemed always to be stirring to make the most genial man, or a very pleasant old woman, fall silent and resort to the phrase, "God alone knows." Men, in particular, and often women, too, seemed to be posing to themselves a mute, anxious question: Was it well for the white people to know so much about them? Even when whites came as friends, as the gods attested, was it well to speak that fraction of their knowledge which the ancestors permitted? For generations they had lived with the feeling that their deep, deep Saramacca language was their own, its knowledge the wisdom of their own people, and here were strangers, speaking to them in their own tongue more easily as day followed day. Was it well? Men taking a white man's boat up and down the river could say what they chose, and the white man who traveled with them did not understand. What if this were to end?

We were constantly made to feel the effect of these doubts in the minds of the people.

"They say here," said Fenekonde one day, "when you get back to your white country, you will have much knowledge to profit you. The two of you will be able to talk Saramacca, and no one at all will know what you say."

Other things were said.

"At the krutu they said, these white people might have been sent by others, as soldiers with toys."

1: Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
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us when we asked him. At one landing place where we stopped for a moment, we could hear the drums sounding the rhythm to the river gods, but the drumming stopped abruptly as word went back along the path that white people had come. Men streaked with pemba came down to the river to look at the Bakra who had visited the village of their Granman.

In the boat, we missed Bayo. The grandson of the Granman, who was our bow paddler, we had met but casually before we had started. There had been none of the chances for conversation that had made of Bayo a friend before he and his great-grandfather came to take us to the country of the Granman. Later we would come to know this youth for a pleasant young man, capable and quiet, who was proud to show his ability, and quick to resent the suggestions of our town man in such matters as making a shelter for the night.

"We are children of the bush!" the young man exclaimed sharply. "We know how to make this." And such a good shelter did the paddlers build that men of a near-by village, who passed, stopped and asked that it not be torn down the next morning, as had to be done with shelters erected for the night on the land of a strange clan, but that we should let it stand so that others might use it.

When we asked him questions, however, or made observations on people who passed by in their canoes, he gave us noncommittal replies. Mataibo, the captain of our boat, was even more reserved, though he liked to twit our town man, and in an unofficial capacity would have been amusing. Conversation between the two paddlers, or between them and the two young men who were entrusted with our other boat, was in the clipped, rapid "deep-Saramacca" speech which, in spite of our use of it in conversation at the Granman's village, we still found it difficult to follow when Bush Negroes spoke informally to one another.

As the day wore on, we began to get used to the rapidity with which village after village was passed. Here was the landing place of the one where we had stopped so that

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765 Thereupon follows a second, who just like the first has a calabash in hand, but this time filled with spirituous liquor, and from time to time sprinkles a few drops of it on the ground, in token of the fact that on this occasion, too, by means of drink, they think of the deceased with joy.

Then they again return to the dwelling, where all are gathered, and celebrate an enjoyable night with song and dancing until daybreak.

Chapter XII

Character, Virtues and Vices

• 157 [577] The Bush Negro, as I have already said above, has a great deal of respect for old age and for distinguished persons; with respect to their closest relations they are honest, which they can- [461] not pride themselves on otherwise. In their ordinary affairs they [609] are not lazy, but work tirelessly whenever it is necessary. With [152] respect to strangers they are generous and obliging, all the more when they can assume that they may claim reward. Jealousy, [784] envy, and malice are their greatest vices. Concerning many matters they have an antipathy that they call trefoe (treef). Thus, [781] for instance, one will eat something, the other not. Also they are very superstitious in small matters, to which they cling all the way down to distant generations; they call that obia (literally translated, bewitchment, magic).

262 [123] An Auca girl who through attachment to my wife and me has already lived with us in the town for fully five years, because [589] since the death of her husband, who was one of my most trusted workers, she did not want to attach herself to another, and who performed all kinds of housework for us, carries her trefoe of not eating any unscaled fish so far that she will not even cook her food on a fire where there is a pot in which an unscaled fish was previously prepared. I know another one who uses no milk and also does not eat meat of any kind (with the exception of bacon), unless it be game, and then it must be prepared by her, on the grounds that everything is prepared with butter and that butter comes from

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577 all, toward one another as fellow tribesmen they are very honest and trust one another's word. Frequently it happens that among them one family leaves the camp to go on a journey or else is absent for some other reason, and that it must leave behind unfenced the cultivated land planted with rice, tubers, bananas, bakoven, and sugar cane. But never will another of them steal any of that. And similarly their dwellings are open, since the entrance is not closed off by any door; upon their departure they leave one thing and another in it, but they will never miss any-
626 thing upon their return. Certainly contributing to this is the circumstance that in the vicinity of everybody's property there is a sign or idolatrous image, which they call obia, to which great power is ascribed, and for those who might want to commit dishonest acts, the legend can be observed, as for the European:
784 "Beware of mantraps." The fear that they have of these obias is not unjustified, for if it should happen at any time that misuse of trust took place, then the culprit, however long it takes, upon discovery will not escape the revenge of the deceived, revenge which frequently consists in the administering of secret remedies whereby terrible diseases and sufferings, if not death, come about.

152 They are very concerned about the faithfulness of their
837 wife or wives, /35/ for the Bush Negro is very jealous, whereas the wives cannot be exonerated of being susceptible to seduction. Accordingly it happens among them more than once that marital fidelity is violated.

184 Of the various tribes, the Aucaners are the most
[177] civilized, but over against that also the craftiest, which can be
[157] attributed to their more frequent intercourse with Europeans.
[161] Among their tribes they are the most powerful, and their numerical strength is estimated at 4,000 to 5,000 souls.

123 According to the declaration of the Bush Negroes, no White has previously enjoyed the trust and attachment that I experienced from them. However, secretively they always conduct themselves toward the Whites, with respect to me they make an exception. If there is something secret among them that I should like to know, they will, upon my request, immediately and without any diffidence communicate it to me.

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165 Factors influencing the demographic characteristics of the Boni. Life expectancy at birth for the Boni is not only 12 years higher than that of the Indians, but is also considerably higher than that of the African peoples from which they came.

This fact can be attributed to two causes:

164 1. The Boni live in a more salubrious environment than
182 the African forest and have better living conditions. It seems likely that the Guianese forest, apart from malaria, presents few causes of bad health and is relatively favorable to man; the absence of trypanosomiasis permits men /525/ to gather on the banks of the large rivers, generously exposed to the air and to the light. The small number of the Boni and their dispersion over a vast territory stands in the way of the transmission of diseases by drinking water. In fact the water is generally healthy. Dysentery and parasitosis are considerably rarer and less serious than in Africa;

14 2. The Boni are a selected population. This is a very im-
162 portant aspect of their demography.

The slaves were the object of a systematic selection; the purchasing commissions of the rich colony of Surinam allowed only individuals of good health and constitution to pass. A second selection took place at the time of the formation of the tribes of Refugee Blacks. More than from a massive rebellion the rebel groups increased in size by the addition of those who, from year to year, escaped at the peril of their lives. Without any doubt those who preferred combat to servitude were the most vigorous and bravest. Voluntary migrations have always been a factor of selection: one may suppose that a migration which took place in such circumstances was accompanied by a particularly rigorous selection which, in spite of the time which has passed (eight generations), continues to influence the physiological
[734] characteristics of the Refugee Blacks. Notably it can explain
[157] the vigorous constitution of the Boni (there are only two congenital invalids out of 810 persons) and their exceptional qualities of physical courage and initiative.

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562 828 [171] It is assumed once and for all that women are shrews on whom one cannot count and from whom one can get nothing. The Refugee Blacks are inexhaustible on this subject and their opinion about the women of their group is very similar to that of Africans in general: they call them ill-natured, devoid of feeling, selfish, greedy, and unfaithful.

562 571 [965] In general, women are held apart from regular social life; no form of customary society of women exists. In the mourning ceremonies, which correspond to a veritable mobilization of the village, they play no role, except to prepare the meals.

562 787 794 Yet the women play indirectly an important role in the social life by way of the cults of possession. The Papa gadu gods so formidable have women nearly exclusively as bearers, and we shall see in studying the functioning of the kunu that they are the principal actors in this. Through this activity, which is exerted in arbitrary fashion on the outskirts of the institutions of regular social life, the women maintain around themselves an atmosphere of fear; it is not impossible that the functioning of these cults is influenced by the concern of the women to maintain their privileged position in the society of the Refugee Blacks.

562 157 Many women are charitable and have a certain generosity toward the members of their family, insuring the maintenance of the old men without resources. But their benevolence is essentially subjective and extends only to a small circle of personal friends and their nearest relatives. As soon as the elders appeal to them for a question of general interest, claiming to give them orders or even advice, they meet an attitude systematically malevolent and stubborn. /70/

[613] The lineage heads avoid giving them orders directly, for they run a strong risk of getting themselves insulted, as we have observed many a time.

152 /241 cont./
828 Jealousy. To speak of jealousy as a negative magic force is
754 not to be false to the thought of the Refugee Blacks. They re-
777 gard it as an attenuated force of wisi, capable of bringing mis-
152 fortunes even if no sorcery has been formulated. Jealousy is
157 very marked in their character, associated with an individualism
754 verging on asocial tendencies. When somebody is accused of
152 wisi, jealousy is the commonest explanation of the crimes
828 attributed to him; it is thought for example that a man can be
jealous of his brother's growing rich to the point of making him
die; that a woman may be jealous of the beauty or health of
152 her sister's children. Not laying themselves open to jealousy
156 is the constant preoccupation of the Refugee Blacks; one ob-
828 serves it in daily behavior, for example in the greetings which
576 they exchange on the river. They never say, "I am well,"
but: "I feel only fair." If they come back from hunting they
say, "I found a little."

152 Examples are not lacking of people who avoid building
156 a fine house or buying an outboard motor in order not to give
828 cause for jealousy. This preoccupation has profound reper-
[182] cussions on the material life and the economy of the Refugee
[463] Blacks; it explains in particular the absence of specialized
professions and trade among them.

[183] Many aspects of the customary law of the Refugee Blacks
[571] have no other function than to exorcise, if one may say so,
tendencies toward jealousy and selfishness which, if they were
given free rein, would poison the life of the collectivity.

76 The rites of death and mourning, which we have shown
181 to constitute the pivot of the social life of the Refugee Blacks,
775 are entirely based on the idea of preserving the surviving spouse
828 from the effect of the jealousy of the deceased.

6:Hurault--458 K-5 (1948-1958) 1961 SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
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CHAPTER IX

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SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ECONOMY OF THE REFUGEE BLACKS.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER POPULATIONS

Influence of the Social Institutions and Psychological Tendencies of the Refugee Blacks on Their Material Life and Their Economy

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182 Certain psychological tendencies of the Refugee Blacks, in part bound up with their moral and religious conceptions and with the historical conditions under which these societies were formed, directly influence their material life in its various aspects: implantation on the ground, agriculture, paid work, trade.

The principal one of these tendencies is individualism, concern for complete material independence.

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31 Influence on agriculture. We have seen that the clearings of the various households issuing from the same kin group were very rarely grouped together. On the contrary, the Refugee Blacks like to disperse their cultivated lands; even in the recently occupied zones where land is not lacking, it happens that one finds isolated clearings in the middle of primary forest more than a kilometer from the riverbank, at the mercy of predatory animals. Ecological conditions, in particular the concern with protection against the manioc-ant, do not explain this dispersion. The Boni recognize that it would be preferable, for fighting the manioc-ant, to group each year all the plantations of one lineage

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157 241 311 in a sector recognized to be undamaged. But objections immediately come to their minds: one would not feel at home, people would be jealous of one another; above all, the children would go pilfering fruit and vegetables in the clearings of other families. The Refugee Blacks are unanimous in thinking that the children of one village put together in a single place would constitute a scourge much worse than the manioc-ant, and that dispersion is the wisest solution for maintaining the peace of families.

562 241 One observes likewise that the total freedom of woman, and the custom which leaves to her /290/ the free disposal of the products of the clearing, contribute toward preventing the development of agriculture with an eye to selling. In order [592] to undertake large clearings farmed jointly by one household, it would be necessary to have very unified and stable households, which is rare.

157 476 Difficulty of grouping for common advantage. The Refugee Blacks are incapable of forming groups voluntarily to undertake the execution of a job with an eye to common advantage. The small groups which get together for fishing, working gold, etc. are formed of intimate friends or near relatives and are hardly larger than four or five persons.

157 454 The Refugee Blacks are still less capable of grouping themselves into societies looking toward future benefits. Putting a part of their resources into a common pot with that of another seems to them not only illusory but immoral. Because of this fact there exists among them no way to group financial assets, sometimes good-sized.

426 Lending without interest is practiced rather commonly, having to do with small sums between near relatives or intimate friends. If a man feels capable of earning his living by buying a motor, he will succeed rather easily in finding the necessary money by borrowing from his brothers or friends, 10,000 francs

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426 here, 5,000 there. But these loans are never large and do not constitute an effective process for grouping financial assets.

150 525 The so-called subscription societies so common in Black Africa are totally contrary to the thinking of the Refugee Blacks, in the same way as games of chance. In 1958 the Maripasoula post, on the occasion of a festival, had organized a tombola. When the principle of it was explained to the Boni, they were unanimous in thinking that the Europeans had odd amusements. Few of them agreed to buy tickets, and the ones who had not won anything left embittered, with the feeling of having been involved in an immoral operation.

157 571 <u>High esteem attached to contracts.</u> This inaptitude for forming groups and combining assets contributes very much toward crystallizing the society of the Refugee Blacks in its present form by opposing all large-scale initiative. On the other hand, 157 577 it develops the sense of personal responsibility. The Refugee 426 Blacks are especially strict with respect to money (1).

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1. This with regard to their mutual relations; as for debts to Europeans, they are not prompt in paying them back; but marked deception, borrowing done for the purpose of swindling, are very rare with the Refugee Blacks.

[829] Custom lays down as a strict principle that everything must be paid for. No one may live at the expense of someone [613] else, no one may borrow without paying back. If a man died before repaying a debt, the members of his lineage would club together to pay it off.

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695 461 157 The Refugee Blacks have a sense of contract to a high degree, and they bring /291/ to the execution of work to which they have committed themselves qualities of seriousness, initiative, and a sense of duty not found to the same degree in Black Africa.

157 671 571 Refusal of any lasting commitment. If the Refugee Blacks honor their contracts, they do not like to commit themselves for a long period.

This attitude results from their desire for independence, but also from the moral and religious law which governs their society.

This law forbids infringing on the liberty of persons, humiliating anyone, and doing anything which might be able to plunge him into anger or affliction. Its effect is to prevent any exploitation of the weak, any creation of a servant or proletarian caste. It even leads to the absence of any permanent subordination of one man to another.

[466] The desire for independence of the Refugee Blacks makes them unwilling to bind themselves definitively to a job, however profitable. When a man judges that he has put aside sufficient savings, he leaves the job which furnished him with these resources.

[464] This tendency makes the search for paid work much more difficult and hazardous; it happens that a man may stay for years without finding gainful work, living in straitened circumstances. But that is the price of independence, and it is accepted without hesitation.

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157 464 463 Wishing to take advantage of all the possibilities which turn up, the Refugee Blacks are led to learn simultaneously the traditional techniques of their group, boating, boat-building, felling of trees, squaring of wood, and /building/ framework. In these techniques they may be considered specialized workers.

157 812 Proud of their strength and knowledge, sure of themselves, the Refugee Blacks are never worried about the future and consider life as an exciting adventure, ceaselessly bringing new things. If the past year has been bad, the new year will be better, with God's help. Nobody doubts that he will find gainful work again.

152 182 Influence of jealousy: absence of specialized professions and trade. Another strong psychological tendency having a direct influence on the economy is jealousy.

152 828 556 753 779 The effect of jealousy, and the fear of jealousy, is to limit enrichment and to maintain a de facto equality: it often happens that talented people forego undertaking profitable work in order not to give occasion for the jealousy which would render their position in the village difficult and might draw misfortunes upon them; for people have the idea that jealousy draws down illnesses and calamities upon him who is the object of it and on his near relatives, by the action of a natural force, even without sorcery being formulated.

754 556 441 829 Fear of sorcery interferes in the same way; one who becomes unusually rich is almost inevitably accused of being a sorcerer and may be obliged to leave the country. Particularly vulnerable are those, very rare, who engage in trade. People do not suspect of sorcery a man who is seen to become rich by /292/ working ceaselessly. But the trader whose wealth increases without his furnishing obvious work, is quickly regarded as a "committed one," accused of having his good luck as a result of a pact with the devil.

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In that can doubtless be seen the most likely explanation of the absence, in the tribes of Refugee Blacks, of any internal trade. There are not even markets in the villages. In practice only Creole and Asian traders are patronized.

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The repugnance which the Refugee Blacks have for trading with one another contributes toward preventing the development of specialized professions among them. Specialization does actually exist: one man is particularly good at building boats, another is a competent carpenter, still another devotes himself mainly to fishing; but the Refugee Blacks exercise these specialties with respect to other peoples and not with respect to one another. Nobody fails to build his own boat, his house, to cut his clearings himself. If it were otherwise, classes and castes would rapidly be created, and that is precisely what the

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moral law of the Refugee Blacks condemns. A special effect of this conception is to preserve family custom from deteriorating, by preventing the rich from becoming great polygamists maintaining idle mistresses. We have never heard it said that a richer man paid someone to perform for him the customary work he owes to his wives, clearings, house, boat. Whatever his wealth may be, he continues to do these jobs by the sweat of his brow, and that contributes toward maintaining in its meaning and value the tacit contract concluded between husband and wife.

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Thus the geographic conditions, associated with influences of a social and psychological order, impose on the Refugee Blacks a unique economy, based on a symbiosis with the coast populations in the form of piece-work or temporary wage-earning.